

CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCIENCE OF YOGA

Bhakti Yoga Book 6

A GUIDE TO SADHANA IN DAILY LIFE

*From the teachings of
two great luminaries of the 20th century*

Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati
Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Sriani Nivaran

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*From the teachings of
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*Including answers from the satsangs of
Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*



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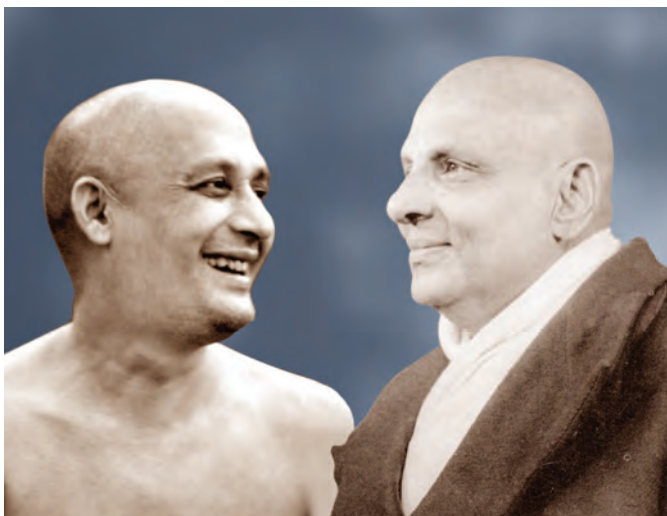
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga
and to our guru Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati
who continues to inspire and guide us
on our spiritual journey.*

Swami Niranjan

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Preface

Talking only about the aim is philosophy; the method to get to the aim is a system; the aim and the method are sadhana, the transformative process. Yoga is sadhana.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The purpose of the in-depth exploration of the branches of yoga contained in *Conversations on the Science of Yoga* is to inform and inspire aspirants to apply the principles of each branch in their own lives, that they may be uplifted and transformed by both the dynamism and subtlety of the yogic tradition. To accomplish this, the teachings must be lived; otherwise, the material has no value, it is merely words on pages. Successful implementation of the wisdom requires a simple, pragmatic approach, a map for the conscious living of life. The final volume of each *Conversations* set provides such a map. Titled *A Guide to Sadhana in Daily Life*, these practical, easy to follow booklets outline sadhanas for the various branches of yoga, be it karma, hatha, bhakti or raja yoga.

Sadhana is the personal effort every aspirant on the spiritual path must make in order to evolve. It is the practice, application, commitment and involvement without which yoga remains theory. The *Guide to Sadhana in Daily Life* booklets distil the essence of each branch of yoga, showing the way to personally experience the concepts

and discussions which constitute the main volumes. While those discussions provide the basis for the integration of yogic ideas and principles in everyday life to enhance the quality of one's experience and expression, it must always be remembered that yoga is a practice which needs to be lived in order for its meaning, method and aim to be fully understood and embodied.

Each booklet gives the spiritual aspirant various possibilities which can be modified and adapted according to the time available, individual inclination and circumstances. They show that adding yoga to one's daily routine and developing a yogic attitude does not necessitate changing one's situation or station in life. With common sense and pragmatism, yoga can be applied to meet one's needs, whatever they may be.

In today's world, time is a major factor and good time management skills are essential for everyone. Those who seek to improve everyday life by including spiritual practices need to set aside some time each day, knowing that it is not the amount of time spent but the regularity and sincerity of the practice that are of paramount importance. Fifteen minutes a day of one-pointed awareness on a chosen practice is better than an occasional hour without focus or purpose.

This definition of spiritual practice is given in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* (1:14):

Sa tu dirgha kala nairantaryasatkarasevito drdhabhumih.

Practice, abhyasa, becomes firmly grounded by being continued for a long time with reverence, without interruption.

There are three conditions for practice or *abhyasa*: it should be done with complete faith; it should continue uninterrupted, and it should go on for quite a long time. When these three conditions are fulfilled, abhyasa becomes firmly established and a part of one's nature.

The *Guide to Sadhana in Daily Life* booklets offer tools to make this possible for everyone. To use the tools well, the desire to put theory into practice must be the motor and motivation of each aspirant, for only practice gives experience and only experience leads to change.

Introduction

The method and purpose of bhakti yoga is to take one away from identification with the little 'I', the body and mind. The aim is to reduce personal whims, conflicts, disharmony, and so on, which tend to imprison and severely limit awareness. The aim is to make the mind a perfect reflector, a perfect mirror of experience. One becomes a bhakta through experience and not merely through belief.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Bhakti Yoga: A Guide to Sadhana in Daily Life is a guide and inspiration for spiritual seekers. Those who wish to enrich their lives with the practices of bhakti yoga and *bhakti*, the sentiment of love, may wonder how to begin. Therefore, the following questions need to be addressed to help implement the right tools and methods:

How to practise bhakti yoga?

How to develop the *bhav* or sentiment of bhakti?

How to introduce elements of devotion into one's daily routine?

How does one become a bhakta?

Various models, ideas and suggestions are presented to help seekers establish the sadhana that will open doors to a higher quality of life filled with contentment and peace. It is at the

discretion of each individual to tailor the sadhana best suited to social obligations, personal disposition and aspiration.

The ultimate goal of bhakti yoga remains the same for all seekers, namely to manage in a positive way the emotional force inherent in human beings. When emotions are managed appropriately, the cultivation and expression of sattwic qualities becomes one's true nature regardless of circumstances. Once the rajasic and tamasic traits are transformed, contact with the all-pervading divinity is a daily reality and no longer an inaccessible ideal.

Discipline and seva are the two main components which introduce bhakti into one's life. For example, the discipline may consist of adopting one regular practice from among those proposed and recording it in a spiritual diary. The choice of one's company or a weekly kirtan session with family and friends may be the bhakti element as long as it is done on a regular basis and not according to whim and fancy. Above all, it is the feeling and sentiment which determines if the aspirant is beginning to cultivate and express bhakti. Whatever the chosen practice or discipline may be it must be considered a sadhana otherwise it will never become bhakti yoga.

The relevance of bhakti and bhakti yoga for the present age, the Kali Yuga, has been emphasized by ancient seers and sages and by contemporary spiritual masters of all traditions. Psychologists and neuroscientists have also discovered the importance of emotions in the life of the individual and the need to work with them alongside the rational and social faculties.

Modern society, however, does not support or encourage the development of such qualities as contentment, positivity and humility. On the contrary, consumerism is at its peak and scandals of human atrocity are broadcasted around the world. Achievement at all cost is still regarded a virtue. Therefore, aspiring bhaktas need solid tools to help them face today's world with courage and embrace their own sadhana with faith.

Bhakti yoga is not the lighting of candles or performing rituals whose meaning is lost, nor tearful or ecstatic emotion-alism. Bhakti yoga is a discipline with rules and regulations. *Bhakti Yoga: A Guide to Sadhna in Daily Life* throws light on the vast possibilities available to one and all. The desire to become a better person and the longing to 'be dear to God' are prerequisites on the path of this branch of yoga. Bhakti yoga is a twenty-four hour attitudinal discipline and not a practice such as asana which can be practised for half an hour or an hour a day.

Bhakti yoga touches the core of every individual – emotions, feelings, sentiments. It seeks to free emotions from limited expression and transform them into an all-embracing expression of understanding and love.



1

Inspiration from the Masters

What is the meaning of sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: In Sanskrit, *sadhana* means spiritual effort, not physical or mental effort. It is the effort made to open the doors beyond which there is enlightenment. The term sadhana is a collective name for those techniques which are deliberately adopted to remove the imperfections of the personality.

Sadhana is the effort one makes to identify with the joy and sorrow of everyone, to extend the horizons and rise above the pettiness of life; this should be the aim of sadhana. Sadhana is a highly developed science of evolution; it is practised for the evolution of oneself. Therefore, sadhana is not the end, but the means.

What is the purpose of sadhana?

Swami Sivananda: The purpose of sadhana is to release life from the limitations with which it is bound, to free one from the thralldom of matter and the fetters of prakriti, to make one realize one's absolute independent nature. By perfecting sadhana the aspirant will be freed from birth and death, and enjoy eternal bliss. This is the goal. This is the dharma of the sadhaka. One has taken birth as a human being in order to reach this goal here and now, in this very birth. If one does not strive to reach this goal, one is wasting one's life and neglecting God's precious gift of human birth.

The practice of sadhana helps the aspirant to control the emotions and passions, and gives the power to resist temptations and remove the disturbing elements from the mind. To this end sadhana should make one ever cheerful, more concentrated, joyful, balanced, peaceful, contented, blissful, dispassionate, fearless, courageous, compassionate, angerless, 'I'-less, desireless and mineless. Sadhana should give a rich inner life, introspective inner vision and equilibrium under all conditions of life. These are the signs of spiritual growth. Seeing visions, lights, hearing transcendental sounds, etc., do not have much spiritual value, although they indicate that one has attained some small degree of concentration.

Why is sadhana important in spiritual life?

Swami Sivananda: Sadhana is the secret of success on the spiritual path. Just as butter can be extracted from milk only after churning, similarly, if the *sadhaka*, the spiritual aspirant who practises sadhana, wants to realize God, sadhana, spiritual practice or discipline, must be performed regularly and constantly in earnest.

Through the process of sadhana man's divine nature unfolds and is able to find positive expression in the intellectual, emotional and physical aspects of life, on individual as well as social planes.

Through sadhana one can have complete mastery over the mind, passions, emotions, impulses, temper and tongue. The body and mind will be ever at one's beck and call. Regular spiritual practice gives calmness of mind at all times. It can help in business life as well as in daily life, and give restful sleep. Sadhana will infuse the aspirant with new strength, confidence and self-reliance.

The essence of sadhana is to behold the Supreme and rest in divinity. Real sadhana is seeing God in everything and transmuting evil into good. Sadhana is any spiritual practice that helps the aspirant to attain the goal of human life, to attain perfection, to realize God. Sadhana is steadying the mind and fixing it on the Lord.

What is the relevance of sadhana to daily life?

Swami Satyananda: Sadhana is no longer confined to mysticism and philosophy. It is the practical application of the techniques in daily life. Sadhana does not have any preconceived axioms or philosophy. It can be practised by those who believe in religion and those who do not, by those who believe in morality and those who do not, and by those who believe in higher spiritual life and those who do not. Sadhana needs to be understood in the context of one's own life.

What is meant by evolution through sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: Human beings are not just static creatures born to eat, drink, live and die. Where have we come from and where are we going? As Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, "Many lives have gone by and many lives will come again because evolution is an unending process." Everything in this universe is evolving, right from matter to spirit. Matter is evolving and undergoing constant change even in the realm of physics. The mind is higher matter which is also undergoing a constant, natural and systematic transformation from age to age, from year to year. A time will come when mind and matter undergo an ultimate transformation into spirit.

Sadhana for the evolution of the entire mass consciousness is the sadhana of the twenty-first century. Every individual has a mission, a purpose. If he has no purpose, the whole of creation, the whole of existence, all philosophy and all religions are completely baseless and purposeless.

How does sadhana reduce the karmic load?

Swami Satyananda: Karmas are quick to accumulate. Samskaras are continually building up, which determine the future karma. In order to counteract this constant inflow of impressions a spiritual practice must be consistently followed, so that one does not become overburdened and bend with the weight. During the period of sadhana, the thoughts, passions, desires and other karma are expended

at the subtle and causal levels and one emerges cleansed of many impurities and obstructions. That is precisely why there is a refreshed and light feeling after an hour of spiritual practice, because the burden that has been carried for many decades in the different realms of consciousness has decreased. It is like shedding a heavy weight and releasing the tension.

How can spiritual awareness be cultivated?

Swami Niranjanananda: To cultivate spiritual awareness, one must move from *tamas* to *sattwa*. This is the definition of spiritual awareness, of spiritual realization. Identify not with the changing and craving nature of the mind but with the pure, luminous and peaceful nature of the mind. The journey from *tamas* to *sattwa* is the spiritual journey. This is the essence; this is the secret of spiritual life.

The process which takes one from *tamas* to *sattwa* has a name, and that is *sadhana*. Generally, when the word ‘*sadhana*’ is used, people identify it with a spiritual discipline, a spiritual practice. However, *sadhana* means attainment of perfection in that which one does.

What is the role of mind management in *sadhana*?

Swami Niranjanananda: The regulation of sensory and mental behaviour is known as *sadhana*. Sensory education takes place at the physical level, the sensorial level and the interactive level. It is an interactive process: you and the world.

Sadhana is a process that leads to mastery and perfection. It is a type of discipline, as without discipline no *sadhana* can be achieved or fulfilled. Therefore, the main subject and focus of *sadhana* is the preparation of the mind.

The mind is always being directed outward, and this mind has to be retrained. Keeping the mind happy does not mean allowing it to follow its whims. It means not coming into direct confrontation or conflict with the mind. The mind must be guided just as one would guide a child to do certain things, to behave and act in a certain manner. In this

way, guide the mind, but do not fight with the mind. The moment one fights with the mind, one becomes the loser; there is disturbance and loss of peace, *shanti*.

It is mental training that allows one to discipline the mind and, after that discipline, to embark on the path of sadhana. The management of the mind and entry into sadhana begins with the cultivation of mental awareness and by knowing, "What is my mood at present? How is that mood or mental condition making me behave, act and respond? Is it an appropriate or inappropriate response? Is it a positive or negative interaction?" This understanding has to come first. When one knows how the mind responds, certain disciplines can begin to be incorporated into the mental behaviour; through discipline, the patterns of thought, the patterns of expression and the patterns of understanding can be changed.

What type of sadhanas suit different temperaments?

Swami Sivananda: Sadhana differs according to the temperament, tendencies and capacities of the aspirant, but remember that all paths lead to the same goal. Different stages of mental development and varying degrees of spiritual evolution naturally require different practices as the basis of sadhana.

Hatha yogis start their sadhana with the body and prana, by practising asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha. Their theory is that by controlling prana, the mind can be controlled. Raja yogis start their sadhana directly with the mind. They improve the quality of the mind by practising yama and niyama. They control the vrittis; they make the mind blank. Gradually they take up the practice of dharana and dhyana in sadhana. Jnana yogis start their sadhana by enquiring into the higher mind and divine will; the jnani sees the one self in all. Bhaktas start their sadhana with devotion, faith and self-surrender. They express their compassion for humankind in selfless service. The bhakta visualizes his deity in all. Tantrics start their sadhana with shakti.

What is the outcome of sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: Equanimity, serenity, one-pointedness of mind and strong determination are acquired through sadhana. Lost confidence is regained. These qualities are essential for successful living in all spheres of life, provided one knows how to use the energies generated by sadhana. The aim of sadhana should be to acquire knowledge, dispassion, devotion, power and peace. If one fails to develop these through sadhana, the way has been missed.

How should sadhana be developed?

Swami Niranjanananda: There are four categories for the development of sadhana:

1. **Define your intention:** Sadhana is the attainment of excellence and perfection in everything that is done. It begins with involvement in constant, continuous awareness and focus. In the absence of awareness and focus, sadhana is not sadhana; it is only a waste of time. There has to be awareness of the present mood and clarity of intention as to what is to be achieved.

First of all, know your intention. That is the primary requirement of starting any sadhana. There needs to be an understanding of the aim. If the intention is not clear, the journey cannot be started. When the decision has been made, “This is where I want to go,” a path can be plotted on the map; this is the starting point for every aspirant.

2. **Have conviction in the practice:** The second point is the need for conviction in and dedication to your practice. One must believe that what is going to be practised will lead to the goal. Conviction and practice must go together. If something is being practised, one should believe, one should be convinced, one should know that the practice is going to lead to the goal; that becomes the focus, the aim.

Every yoga and every practice has an aim, a goal, a target. Once the intention is clear and the path is plotted, the appropriate practices can be selected to achieve the goal.

3. Accept the change: The third aspect is accepting the change. If some change is experienced through sadhana, some transformation, be ready to accept it and not negate, deny or confront it. Many people do not accept change. They want to remain the same with an added quality, but how can one remain the same with an added quality? If a new quality is brought in, the reflection of that quality will be seen in one's behaviour, one's responses, one's actions and one's performance. There has to be openness to accept the change that occurs spontaneously and naturally, without compulsive and obsessive thinking as to why this is happening or why that is not happening.

Accept the change in whatever way it is felt, in whatever way it is observed. It is your response to sadhana. When one eats or drinks, external things go into the body. Satisfaction, happiness and enjoyment is your response to what you are eating and drinking. In the same manner, accepting the change and allowing it to take place is your response, knowing that it is going to take you in a different direction where you will be different; perhaps better, perhaps expressive, but different to what you were before.

4. Practise continuous improvement: The fourth category of sadhana is improving the changed nature with more conviction, faith, determination and belief. Integrate the practice and the change into life, and improve on it.

This is the process of sadhana in four categories. It can happen at a sensory level, a mental level, an emotional level and a spiritual level. Asanas are practices to improve the quality and condition of the body and the senses. The method to improve the quality of the mind is meditation, in all its four aspects: pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. In the same manner, just as meditation is the practice to cultivate the mental faculties and creativity, bhakti yoga is the practice to cultivate balanced emotions, and mantra is the practice to cultivate spiritual awareness.

2

Guidelines for Sadhana

Once the decision has been made to adopt a sadhana, the first step has been taken in yoga. The *sankalpa*, resolve, to embark upon a regular practice is a significant moment, expressing the desire and inspiration to create a positive change in some aspect of one's life. It shows both recognition that transformation is possible, and the motivation to act on that recognition.

Before embarking on sadhana, it is essential to have a realistic understanding of one's goals and circumstances. Yoga is a pragmatic system which gives many guidelines and tools to help optimize accomplishments in sadhana. Tested in the laboratory of time, thousands of years of experience are available to help the practitioner succeed! Everyone's situation is certainly unique, but all have human nature in common. Bearing this in mind, each individual sadhana needs to be based on some general principles. These principles are recommended by the classical books of the yogic tradition and offer a commonsense approach to leading a balanced life. They support the effort made to uplift oneself through sadhana.

Know the aim

Why do you want to do sadhana? The reason may be physical, mental, emotional, spiritual or a combination. Clarity of intention makes sadhana more powerful at a number of levels.

Based on a clear aim, the right sadhana can be planned with the help of a teacher. If the aim is to strengthen the back, certain asanas must be chosen. If the aim is to improve the digestion, certain shatkarmas and asanas need to be done. If the aim is relaxation, a combination of asanas, pranayamas and yoga nidra may be used. If the aim is emotional stability, hatha yoga needs to be wisely combined with raja, bhakti and karma yoga. If the aim is spiritual, the connection with a source of inspiration becomes the foundation of sadhana.

In this way, once the aim is defined, a program can be devised accordingly. Also, if the intention is clear, the deeper layers of the mind become receptive to the sadhana, enhancing the results.

Lifestyle

Success in sadhana requires an appropriate lifestyle. Half an hour or an hour of yoga each day cannot make up for indulgent, erratic living. For this reason, the yogic tradition has always advocated a particular lifestyle in combination with the practice of sadhana. The principles of a yogic lifestyle are:

Regularity of routine: This includes, regular times for meals and for rising and going to bed. Meals should be taken during daylight hours when the digestive system is most active. Early to bed and early to rise also ensure a healthy, natural sleep pattern. A regular time should be kept for sadhana.

Diet: The diet should be simple, fresh and balanced. Snacking between meals and overeating is to be avoided. When taking meals the stomach should be half-filled with food, one-quarter with water and one-quarter left empty.

Moderation in exertion: The body and mind should not be stressed by overexertion, whether physical or mental. Maintain equilibrium within the body-mind.

Influences: Just as the physical diet needs to be moderate and healthy, so too the diet for the mind and emotions.

This means being aware of and minimizing exposure to disturbing and destabilizing influences: for example, the type of entertainment, the type of socializing and negative emotional involvement in relationships. It means choosing exposure to uplifting experiences. This includes spending time in positive environments, inspiring situations, being with like-minded people and reading inspirational literature.

Living environment: Yoga recommends living in a peaceful place where the air and water are clean. This means social peace as well as environmental purity. A culture that is open-minded allows individuals to pursue their goals in life without worry. A healthy natural environment is full of prana, giving natural vitality and brightness. The home should be simple and clean, the atmosphere cooperative and supportive. If possible, have a room or space that is just for sadhana; the purity of such a place helps relax and connect more deeply with the practices.

Anushthana

The concept of anushthana is extremely helpful when developing sadhana. *Anushthana* means defining a set period of time for a specific sadhana. Most people find it difficult to sustain regularity of sadhana, especially at first: forever is a long time. Therefore, it may be more realistic to say, “I will practise this sadhana for one week and then review.” At the end of the week, assess and decide to continue or modify for another set period of time, depending on needs and circumstances.

The anushthana can be any length. A practice can even be observed for just one hour! For example, decide to have only positive thoughts for one hour. Every time a negative thought arises, be aware of it and reject it. If that can be managed for one hour, perhaps in the next hour, the tendency of positive thinking starts to become a habit without so much effort. But for the hour, a special effort was made. Other sadhanas, such as shatkarmas or SWAN meditation can be practised once a week, at a set time.

This principle can be applied to any type of sadhana, whether of hatha yoga, meditation, mantra, bhakti or karma yoga. This means the approach to sadhana can be flexible. When an anushtana is decided upon, one makes sure there is time available for it. Rather than risking failure in maintaining regularity, this approach brings confidence and positivity.

Attitude

Certain mental qualities are essential to sadhana: awareness, the attitude of a witness and freedom from expectation.

Yoga cannot be practised without awareness. Without awareness, it is not yoga. Awareness means observing the finest details of one's experience, whether it be a physical, mental, emotional or spiritual experience. In asana, become aware of the feeling of the body moving, stretching and relaxing. In pranayama, become aware of the entire experience of the breath – its depth, quality, duration, limitation and expansion. In meditation, become acutely aware of the experience of the mind, whether in the form of thoughts, feelings or images. In karma yoga, become aware of interactions with the world and the underlying patterns of thought and behaviour. In bhakti yoga, become aware of emotional patterns. In jnana yoga, become aware of the inner self, by observing strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs. Through this awareness one begins to know oneself more thoroughly.

The cultivation of awareness develops into the attitude of being a witness. This means observing the experience without becoming lost through involvement in it. The experience may be of body, breath or mind, but the feeling is of having stepped back, having created a little space between oneself and the experience. This means there will be greater objectivity, less identification with the experience and an opportunity to respond consciously, rather than to simply react automatically. The attitude of the witness which is practised during sadhana is training for bringing this

attitude into daily life, as one must in the practice of karma yoga, jnana yoga and bhakti yoga.

Freedom from expectation allows an expanded state of consciousness. This means it opens up possibilities. As long as there is expectation of a certain result, that idea will be the focus of the mind. If it is achieved, one is happy, but if it is not, there is disappointment. It is a self-limiting attitude, as it may suppress other outcomes or experiences. It is also a self-centred attitude, as it presumes knowledge of the effect of sadhana, whether the expectation is positive or negative. Yoga has its own process and that process needs to be trusted. One may or may not accomplish what one sets out to, but on the journey there will definitely be experiences and adventures of which there may have been no prior knowledge. Sadhana needs to be approached with openness and freedom of mind.

Common sense

Ultimately, common sense is needed in all spheres of life, including sadhana. Ideals are of no use without common sense. Whatever one's situation, there is a need to balance external life with a healthy inner life. Sadhana brings that balance, not only through the actual time of practice, but by strengthening connection with the more subtle dimensions of who one is, just as exercise strengthens a muscle.

This does not mean entertaining notions of enlightenment or altered states of consciousness. It means being realistic about making life a positive experience in which there is growth of consciousness and of connection with all that is good and pure, knowing that these qualities already exist in each of us, and that through one's efforts a light can be shone on them, establishing a stronger link and relationship with them. It is a matter of aligning with those qualities inside oneself and also in others, so that the positive nature becomes a source of power. This requires a clear, strong body and mind which can express wisdom in thought and action for dealing with situations appropriately

and effectively. In this way, the society one lives in and the lives of those one knows are enhanced. Sadhana, practised systematically and consistently, is the vehicle that will take one in this direction.

Using this booklet

The sadhanas outlined in this booklet are intended to be used in conjunction with the associated *Conversations* books. For example, the content in *Karma Yoga Books 4–6* explores and explains the concepts referred to in *Karma Yoga Book 7*. The books on hatha yoga explain the purpose, effects and sadhanas of the various hatha yoga practices in detail. The main volumes on each branch of yoga contain a vast body of knowledge which underpin the sadhanas. Referring to them will enrich and inspire the practitioner's development of yoga sadhana and lifestyle.

Branches of yoga such as hatha and raja include many specific techniques which must be learned from a qualified Satyananda Yoga teacher. Satyananda Yoga is based on the approach of the gurus who are the voice of the *Conversations* books. Their teachings are the source of the sadhanas and, through their guidance, teachers all over the world have been trained in the 'technology' and methodology of yogic practices. Correct instruction from qualified teachers is essential.

Head, heart and hands

Finally, the idea of integral yoga needs to be remembered. Human beings are multifaceted, blessed with a complex and versatile physical body, a complex and versatile mental structure, a complex and versatile emotional capacity and a spiritual depth of vast potential. All these dimensions need care and understanding. The various branches of yoga exist for that purpose; therefore, integral yoga says, take a leaf from each branch with which to nourish the tree of life.

Integral yoga means having a balanced approach to yoga practice by integrating sadhanas from the different

yogas rather than focusing on only one aspect. Sometimes it is thought that hatha yoga is not needed, only meditation is needed, but everyone has a body and that body cannot sit comfortably for meditation if it is full of aches and pains and disturbances. Sometimes it is thought that the path of bhakti, purification of the heart, is all one needs, but how will that pure heart express its sentiments appropriately without karma yoga? Swami Sivananda said the yoga of head, heart and hands must be practised. If that can be done, our experience of life will blossom and its fragrance will bring joy wherever we are.



3

Sadhana 1 – Facing and Overcoming Obstacles

Bhakti Yoga Book 6 is a practical guide for aspirants who wish to apply the practices of bhakti yoga on a day-to-day basis. Along with the cultivation of positive qualities of bhakti yoga, the practice of eradicating obstacles, stumbling blocks and negativity is equally important for progress. Swami Sivananda emphasizes the need to face and overcome these negative forces in life: “An intelligent and comprehensive understanding of the various obstacles acting as stumbling blocks on the spiritual path is an indispensable requisite for an aspirant. Only then will one find it easy to conquer them one by one.” Therefore, the first sadhana aims at managing and eventually eradicating the expressions of a negative and self-centred ego.

Swami Sivananda composed a song *Obstacles to God-Realization*. Here are some of the many obstacles which he lists in the song:

Duality, multiplicity, plurality,
Individuality, slave mentality,
Sensuality, sensitivity, sentimentality,
Atrocity, curiosity, cruelty,
Anxiety, partiality, timidity,
Are the obstacles to attain Divinity.

Just these few examples of obstacles illustrate the multifaceted forms in which they manifest, influence one’s life and

hamper progress on the spiritual path. They must be dealt with rigourously and without pity.

SLEEP

Tandra is a half-sleepy state; *alasya* is laziness; *nidra* is sleep. These three are great obstacles on the spiritual path. Sleep is a strong, old habit, and it takes time and demands great strength of will to remove it. Reducing sleep is a troublesome practice in the beginning, but it will be pleasant in the end. Sleep should be reduced carefully and gradually.

When drowsiness tries to take hold, one should stand up, do japa and dash cold water on the face and head. A balance must be found to avoid nervous tension from lack of sleep and lethargy caused by oversleeping. Common sense must be always applied.

GRIEF AND DEPRESSION

Every aspirant on the spiritual path becomes a victim to the mood of depression at the beginning of the sadhana period. This mood has to be overcome through discrimination, reflection, enquiry, prayer and singing the Lord's name vigorously.

Grief is a mental creation, which appears when the mind is attached to the body and illusory connections. One has to treat and remove the cause by taking a long, brisk walk, running in the open air, singing divine songs and reading elevating texts and scriptures. To save the soul from sinking into helpless despondency, the utterances of the world's realized souls are truly magical.

DOUBT

Doubt seriously torments and disturbs one's peace of mind. An aspirant begins to doubt the existence of God and whether he will succeed in his God-realization. Lack of faith is a dangerous obstacle on the spiritual path.

Whenever doubt becomes overpowering one should at once take recourse in the company of saintly and wise people and remain with them for some time. The mind is Maya. It misleads people through doubts and forgetfulness, and the doubting mind deludes the aspirant.

TALKATIVENESS

The energy that is spent in talking must be conserved and used for divine contemplation. A talkative person cannot dream of having peace for even a short time. Talkative people are restless people. An aspirant should say only a few words when necessary and that, too, only on spiritual matters. A talkative person is unfit for the spiritual path.

Mouna does not mean silence but 'measured speech'. It is an important practice for all aspirants as it develops discrimination. Silence itself is a practice which connects the aspirant with peace, contentment and the divine.

FEAR

A timid aspirant is absolutely unfit for the spiritual path. One must be prepared to risk one's life if one wants to attain immortality. Spiritual wealth cannot be gained without self-sacrifice and self-denial. Fear is not an imaginary non-entity. It assumes solid forms and troubles the aspirant in various ways.

Fear of public criticism stands in the way of the aspirant's spiritual progress. Fear of all sorts should be totally eradicated by reflection, enquiry and devotion and the cultivation of the opposite quality, courage. Positive overcomes negative. Courage overpowers fear and timidity. If fear is conquered, one is on the road to success.

HATRED

Hatred is the deadliest foe and inveterate enemy of an aspirant. Aversion, contempt, prejudice, sneering, taunting, teasing, ridiculing, mocking, frowning upon and showing a wry face are all forms of hatred.

Hatred develops by repeatedly thinking of hatred, and ceases only through love. Hatred needs prolonged and intense treatment, as it branches out in various directions in the subconscious mind.

INSINCERITY AND HYPOCRISY

The aspirant should not become lost in false feelings or superficial showy expressions of bhakti, or try to impress other people with false displays of devotion. One should only express and follow that which comes directly from the heart, being true to one's personality. If bhakti is not felt at the present time, there is no need to worry; it is something that will arise. As Shakespeare so wisely said, "To thine own self be true." This is important.

If one expresses devotion without the corresponding inner feeling, this is hypocrisy and self-deception, which are two of the greatest obstacles on the path of bhakti yoga and major blocks on the path to expanded awareness. Religious hypocrisy is more dangerous than the hypocrisy of worldly people.

THE SIX ENEMIES

In the *Atharva Veda* it is said that to realize bhakti, one has to eliminate six obstacles from one's nature and life.

The first obstacle is attachment or infatuation, *moha*. Swami Sivananda says that attachment is like the owl that cannot see by day and only sees by night. Attachment is like that photophobic owl; under the influence of attachment one is blind to dharma and justice. Therefore, one has to be victorious over attachment.

The second obstacle or fault is anger, *krodha*. According to Swami Sivananda anger is like a wolf, always ready to bite and eat everyone up. A wolf is a wild beast and so is anger. Anger knows no discrimination and it eats up the goodness in life. There are some, however, who change this wild nature.

The third obstacle that must be overcome for bhakti to flourish in one's life is jealousy, *matsarya*. Like a dog it must be held by a leash and kept under control.

The fourth is lust, *kama*, which is like *chakva-chakvi*, a species of geese. The scriptures say one must triumph over lust.

The fifth obstacle one must conquer is arrogance, *mada*, which behaves like Garuda, the haughty eagle.

Lastly, through proper methods one must destroy greed, *lobha*, which is like the vulture.

When the six defects of attachment, anger, jealousy, desire, arrogance and greed are rectified, bhakti will arise spontaneously and the path of bhakti yoga is clear. These enemies are the six children of duality. One can experience the spiritual nature, the awakened nature, the untainted nature of consciousness only by renouncing and staying away from the influences and effects of the six enemies of life.

Every human being is born with these six and for some time they are friends. They help shape one's individuality and identity. The mind is born with the six traits and lives with them. They shape and mould one's perception of life. They motivate one, they make up one's *samskaras* and character. Intelligence or education has nothing to do with these six traits of the mind. The most highly educated people express the distorted behaviour of anger, the most pious people can become jealous and the happiest person can become desirous. These six friends define the nature of everyone's mind.

Without these friends no one would be able to survive in the world. When a child starts crawling on his hands and knees, there is already anger, irritation, aggression and fear

in his mind. These are the natural expressions of his life. A child has a desire for chocolate and toys; a child has anger and irritation and with that anger he screams, sulks and throws tantrums.

These six friends are born and live with every individual. They are one's tenants, and one cannot evict them; yet one can disassociate and disconnect from them, for there comes a point in everyone's life when the six friends become one's enemies. The moment they take control of one's life, one's behaviour, thinking and feeling, they become enemies. They no longer help one survive, instead they hamper further growth. In the language of sadhus they are known as the *shat ripus*, the six enemies; and in the language of Samkhya and Vedanta they are known as the *shat vikara*, the six distortions.

The difficulties, stress, tensions, frustrations, depressions and elations that one faces in life take birth from the six distortions of the mind. When ambitions, desires or passions are unfulfilled, the mind is at its most disturbed. Due to the six enemies there is no peace and happiness in life. Therefore, if one wants to deal with tension, one's negative tendencies and destructive habits in life, it should not be done at a superficial level. One has to manage and deal with the root cause, the six enemies.

A bhakta has to have the honesty to face these enemies and make constant effort to replace the negative with the positive. The disciplines of bhakti yoga aim to manage the emotions and redirect their energy away from a gross, tamasic and destructive expression to a refined, sattwic and positive expression. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna describes the workings of three of these enemies (2:62 to 63):

*Sangaat sanjaayate kaamah kaamaat krodho'bhijaayate.
Krodhaad bhavati sammohah sammohaat smriti vibhramah;
Smritibhramshaad buddhinaasho buddhinaashaat pranashyati.*

When a man thinks of objects, attachment to them arises; from attachment desire is born; from desire anger arises. From anger comes delusion; from delusion the

loss of memory; from loss of memory the destruction of discrimination; from the destruction of discrimination he perishes.

Desire takes birth due to contact, connection, attachment and closeness. Unfulfilled desire gives rise to anger. Due to anger a man becomes foolish. Due to foolishness the intellect deteriorates. With a corrupt intellect the person is unable to achieve peace and happiness; instead he faces more disturbance and disorder in life.

No one likes to be angry or jealous, no one wants to be a slave to desires, greed or uncontrollable pride. No one wants to live a life of delusion. The bhakta's sadhana is the purification of emotion, the energy of which may rule his life against better knowledge. Recognizing, accepting and transcending the influence of the inner enemies is a sadhana of bhakti yoga.

Pratipaksha bhavana, replacing the negative, tamasic expression of the mind with a positive, uplifting and sattwic expression, is a sadhana and discipline ideally suited to tackle the six enemies. As with all the sadhanas proposed in *Bhakti Yoga in Daily Life*, it is strongly recommended to record one's effort, on a daily or weekly basis. The aspirant should know and analyze the ways he thinks, feels and interacts in the world.

PRATIPAKSHA BHAVANA FOR THE SIX ENEMIES

For the practice of pratipaksha bhavana the example of the six enemies is given here. They are *kama*, desire and sensual passion, *krodha*, anger and aggressive nature, *lobha*, greed, *moha*, delusion, infatuation and sensorial hypnosis, *mada*, pride and arrogance, and *matsarya*, jealousy and envy. The practice consists of three steps: first the aspirant has to identify which of the six enemies is active, then wish to come out of the negative state and finally make the effort to develop the opposite. For example:

- The insatiable and futile nature of desires is replaced with contentment.
- Anger is best managed by practising forgiveness and pranayama, such as deep breathing or bhramari pranayama. The aspirant has to decide which approach will give the quickest result or is most appropriate to subdue the anger.
- Greed is best curbed by its opposite, generosity, and by the SWAN meditation. If this is done on a daily base the result of introspection and analysis will yield an honest picture of what is a real need and what is just a whim, another unnecessary means of self-gratification.
- Delusion and infatuation are best countered by methods of introspection and reflection. Meditation is a means to disconnect from both the external environment and the endless train of thought. Once one identifies with inner silence and stillness, clarity replaces confusion, openness replaces obsessive thinking.
- The opposite of pride and arrogance is innocence, simplicity, humility, renouncing one's need to assert oneself.
- The self-inflicted suffering of envy and jealousy is overcome by generating a genuine feeling of happiness for the other person. This approach may take some practice, be applied reluctantly at first, however, eventually the attitude of goodwill will be a liberating experience.

In this manner, through the practice of pratipaksha bhavana, the six enemies are slowly eradicated and replaced by positive and uplifting qualities everyone will benefit from, not only the practitioners but the environment as well.

Pratipaksha bhavana can be applied to any feeling of negativity replacing it with the feeling of bhakti, unconditional love for one and all. Swami Sivananda used the medium of songs to convey his teaching and give practical instructions. In the *Song of Avidity*, the practice and method of pratipaksha bhavana is beautifully described:

Song of Avidity

Avidity, cupidity, stupidity,
Audacity, turbidity, instability,
Angularity, eccentricity, irritability.
These are the obstacles to samadhi.
These are the impurities of the mind.
Avidity is covetousness or greed.
Cupidity is lust or passion.
Stupidity is delusion or infatuation.
Audacity is arrogance or impertinence.
Turbidity is confusion of mind.
Instability is wandering of the mind.
Angularity is a form of vanity.
Eccentricity is slavery to whims and fancies.
Irritability is anger in all its forms.
Remove these impurities through the opposite virtues.
Avidity through practice of generosity;
Cupidity through practice of purity;
Instability through trataka and pranayama,
upasana and japa;
Angularity through practice of humility;
Eccentricity through practice of right conduct;
Irritability through practice of patience, forbearance;
You will enter into samadhi and attain kaivalya.

Here are some questions one may ask in regard to Prati-paksha Bhavana and the Six Enemies. It is best to keep a written record in a spiritual diary, for instance, to enhance one's awareness, difficulties and progress:

- How did the enemy arise?
- How long did the enemy last?
- How did the enemy express itself?
- How did I use the enemy's opposite?
- What difficulty did I encounter?

DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

Not everything about obstacles and stumbling blocks is bad. Recognizing, understanding and accepting one's limitations, conditioning and negativity is a tremendous motivation to strive for change. Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati beautifully describes how the aspirant can use obstacles on the path of bhakti yoga:

These obstacles are a form of grace, for without facing one's ego distractions, one would never know their existence and so would never remove them. There would be no progress along the path to expanded awareness. It is during this 'dark night of the soul' that one comes to terms with one's faults, recognizes them and takes steps to eliminate them. It is during this dark night of the soul that one's imperfections are realized. This leads to more humility, which in turn leads to greater bhakti and communion.

Strangely enough, it is often during these periods of spiritual regression or backsliding that one's bhakti can be intensified. One is confronted clearly with a block, a misconception or a strong sense of ego, which was not obvious before. One realizes that one has come face to face with a further imperfection that can be purged. One realizes how important it is to experience these strong ego feelings.

The ego is humbled so that one can know bliss and harmony. One's darkness leads to more bhakti. This 'dark night of the soul' eventually leads to more light.

4

Sadhana 2 – Developing Bhakti

The steps or disciplines of bhakti yoga are as valid as they were when first defined in ancient times and only a little interpretation is required to suit the present age. A few guidelines are given along with a sample of how to record and observe one's practice in a spiritual dairy. The sadhanas may be adapted to personal needs and circumstances. Some aspirants may want to practise one of the disciplines for a certain time, say a month, and then move on through the other disciplines one by one. Others may want to integrate all the disciplines into their daily routine at the same time. Each aspirant has to find the mode best suited to develop bhakti and make bhakti yoga a living reality.

In the company of truth

Satsang and shravanam mean being in the company of truth. Ideally the truth is exemplified by a living master who lives and breathes truth, whose every act and word is an expression of truth. However, if a living master is not part of one's life, scriptures become the source of truth. Scriptures of spiritual disciplines, biographies of saints and sages, and the sacred books of world religions are satsang and inspiration for the aspirant. It is up to the individual to either deepen the understanding of one teaching or to glean inspiring truths from various traditions.

The daily or weekly discipline consists of setting time aside to read or listen to a talk with an open mind. More time is required to absorb the message or teaching and determine ways to practise it. Satsang is not indulging in a flow of beautiful words or the master's presence, but complete absorption and participation of head, heart and hands in the teaching of truth.

For those aspirants fully immersed in the world, satsang takes on yet another meaning: the choice of the company they keep. They must ask themselves: Who do I socialize with? Are my friends good, positive, inspiring company? Do my friends encourage me on my spiritual path and search? Do the people I spend time with follow the same goal, are their interests and aspirations similar to mine? How do I feel after I have been with people, enriched or drained?

Uplifting company is satsang, company which lures one away from bhakti yoga is *kusang*. To make this choice is the first step of an aspiring bhakta and determines the progress of any subsequent sadhana.

Shravanam, listening to stories of gods, goddesses, saints and sages, is a practice that requires time and an open heart. Each act and word bears meaning that has to be discovered, understood and applied. Anecdotes or events in the lives of saints and sages are never coincidental or void of teaching. They are examples and models of perfect human expression.

Observance

Padasevanam is an invitation to follow to the letter the instructions given by the master or the teaching one has adopted and wishes to express. If the directives are to maintain silence for three hours daily, fast once a week, teach or serve the poor, meditate or chant, then this has to be carried out without questioning, with faith and regularity. Adherence to the teaching one has chosen to follow is a practice of bhakti yoga.

Constant awareness

Smaranam is the practice of continuous remembrance. Caught in one's responsibilities, involved in daily activities which may deprive one even of a good night's sleep, it is not always obvious to remember one's spiritual aspirations, one's resolve to be a better person, one's sadhana, or the presence of the divine in this world. Smaranam is a mother's ability to maintain constant awareness of her child while engrossed in activities of household and work.

The recommended bhakti yoga practice for smaranam is repetition of mantra. Apart from the time set aside for mantra practice, the mantra has to become a living presence throughout the day and even night. Repeating the mantra is a most efficient way to remain connected with the sentiment of bhakti.

Kirtan is singing the many names of the divine. It is an orderly, structured singing. The only aim of kirtan is to evoke the sentiment of connecting to and longing for the divine. There is no element of performance or show in kirtan, only simplicity, joy and the attempt of all singers to express their feeling of love. It does not matter how many people participate, or how beautiful the voice; what matters is the sincerity of the participants. Kirtan may be done in the family, among friends, on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. However, it should not be an occasional event but a regular practice if it is to be part of bhakti yoga, otherwise kirtan just becomes a moment of pleasure and fun, *bhoga*, rather than yoga.

All in one and one in all

Atmabhava means seeing oneself in others, seeing the same spark of divinity in oneself and in others. It is according to Swami Satyananada the culmination of spiritual life, where diversity is replaced with unity, separation with union, where differences disappear as understanding and compassion become the foundation of one's life and interaction with the world.

Forever at peace

Santosha, or contentment, is the ability to see the positive in any given situation. The image of the glass being half full rather than half empty is a clear illustration. The bhakta does not focus on what is or might be missing in his life, instead he is constantly aware and grateful of what life has to offer. Contentment is not a passive attitude of 'all is well' but an acceptance of the roles played by the divine, nature and one's own being and involvement in life. Contentment flourishes when it reaches out towards others, when it is shared with others and becomes all-inclusive. When there are few desires left in the life of an aspirant, it is the first sign of spiritual progress. Contentment is the experience.

Simply Yours

Atmanivedana, *samarpan* or surrender, is the last step of bhakti yoga. The aspirant relinquishes personal interests, aspirations, even of a spiritual nature. The only prayer left is a heartfelt 'Let Thy will be done', accompanied by unquestioning acceptance of whatever that 'will' might be. Surrender is a high state of being and only few are able to live it fully. Most aspirants need to shed their desires and ambitions gradually. There has to be absolute honesty otherwise there is no experience of true surrender, only delusion. Pretence and a false understanding of surrender creates stress and confusion in the minds of aspirants and does not take them closer to the goal. Therefore, sincerity on the path of bhakti yoga is necessary and then surrender will just happen in a simple and natural way.

5

Sadhana 3 – Towards Sattwa

One should not worry about perfecting any of the qualities. Developing qualities is not a practice that one does only once and then puts aside. One keeps rotating continuously, and in each new cycle, there will be a new revelation, new understanding, new realization of who one is and how one can manage oneself in a better way.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Developing positive qualities

This is a sadhana of rigorous self-discipline. Constant awareness of negative, destructive tendencies has to be maintained along with an effort to turn the negative into positive. The sadhana for this process is *pratipaksha bhavana*, cultivating the opposite. When anger arises the effort must be made to cultivate and feel forgiveness. Greed and the coveting nature is replaced by generosity, desire by a genuine sense of contentment. The critical and judgmental mind must be countered with understanding and acceptance. In this way, the negative tendency cannot take root, grow and become strong in one's life.

Bhakti yoga, the yoga of emotional management, transforms conditioned, limiting, restricting emotions into uplifting, expansive emotions. Emotions are 'energy in motion', and they can be tamasic, rajasic or sattvic in nature.

It is the sadhana of the aspirant to direct the motion towards a sattwic expression of this energy. Ultimately, the negative emotion binds while the positive emotion liberates.

There are two ways to cultivate sattwic or positive qualities: one is to practise consciously the quality, the other is to replace the negative, tamasic or rajasic quality with its opposite, pratipaksha bhavana. Both methods should be applied side by side, for why should one wait for the negative to happen to develop the positive counter-emotion? Why not try to be positive from the beginning? Using both approaches heightens awareness and fine-tunes the understanding of how emotions arise and influence one's actions and interactions. Through awareness one becomes the witness of cause and effect. A harsh, unkind word will bring about certain results and consequences unlike those caused by a kind and caring word. With practice, determination and a strong desire to become a better and more sattwic person, transformation will certainly take place.

Swami Sivananda's *Song of 18 ITIES* is a list of positive, sattwic qualities which everyone knows about, has used or not used, struggled with or ignored. These qualities are disciplines which will make the journey through life smoother, more enjoyable and uplifting – for everyone.

Song of 18 ITIES

Serenity, Regularity, Absence of Vanity,
Simplicity, Sincerity, Veracity,
Equanimity, Fixity, Non-Irritability,
Adaptability, Humility, Tenacity,
Integrity, Nobility, Magnanimity,
Charity, Generosity and Purity.

Another set of positive qualities are those known to all cultures, traditions and times. Again when used, implemented and applied they make the experience of life more positive and joyful for oneself and others.

Positive qualities

Patience, cheerfulness, forgiveness, hospitality, understanding, acceptance, tolerance, loving kindness, friendliness, courage and selflessness.

It does not matter which quality one chooses to strengthen and use as long as sincerity and faith in the sadhana prevail. Change is sure to come, step by step, and after trial and error. Aspirants should never be discouraged but continue to strive for the betterment of their being and the upliftment of their environment.

One may choose any quality to develop, cultivate and express in life. A spiritual diary is a useful companion on the path of change and transformation. It is important to keep a record of one's faltering steps, one's progress and triumphs. A daily record is best, however, one may also set one day a week apart, look back and reflect on the week, one's interactions and ability to manage the challenges of day-to-day life.

It is recommended to focus on one particular quality for an extended period of time, so that the opportunity is given to progress. There is no right or wrong method, it is the inspiration and commitment to continue on the path of bhakti yoga which determines the success in one's sadhana.



6

Sadhana 4 – Swami Sivananda’s Eightfold Path

Swami Sivananda’s yoga of eight steps – serve, love, give, purify, be good, do good, meditate and realize – is a sadhana in its own right. With seva, serving, the aspiring bhakta starts his journey, for according to Swami Sivananda, “The first step on the spiritual path is selfless service of humanity.” There are infinite possibilities of service, and no excuse for not practising this discipline of bhakti yoga. Little acts of kindness are service, a gesture of friendliness is service, providing assistance, helping, encouraging and uplifting without any expectation, yet with a heart full of love and care, is service.

Once the aspirant is on the path, the other steps follow for they are a natural progression, a natural evolution towards the goal of feeling and expressing universal love.

Serve: Service is an extension of one’s actions. When one is able to serve others without expectations, it becomes seva. Seva has to be connected with the idea of compassion and love. Love has to be experienced and expressed in an unconditional way.

Love: When action is directed for the upliftment of others, it carries the emotion of love. This love is universal, not between two people, but the entire world and even unknown people become the object of love.

Give: Giving is not possible until one develops awareness of other people. To give means to give the best of oneself to the world to ensure that one has contributed in the appropriate manner.

Purify: The lotus takes birth in water and grows in water, but not a single drop of water attaches to it. Yogis have used this image as a symbol of purity. With this purity a state of mind evolves which is transcendental, free from any kind of craving or desire.

Be good, do good: With the attainment of purity the next step is that human life becomes good. There are no dark spots, only an expression of beauty, which can be expressed whether in suffering or happiness. It is the equipoised, harmonious state of living. When in harmony with oneself, with nature and the divine, actions become good. There is no awareness of the actions becoming good because there is no arrogance.

Meditate and realize: When one becomes good in all dimensions and expresses goodness and purity, one is connected with the entire nature and humanity. In that state the unified field of consciousness is experienced. At a subtle and transcendental level one unites with the entire universal consciousness.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



7

Sadhana 5 – To Be Dear to Sri Krishna

In Chapter 2 of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna defines yoga (2:48):

... evenness of mind is called yoga . . .

In the chapter on bhakti yoga, Chapter 12, Sri Krishna describes the spiritual aspirant who is dear to him. It is the person balanced and even-minded in success and failure, when faced with gain and loss, praise and criticism. The person who lives life with equanimity and mental balance is dear to Sri Krishna. The quality of equipoise can be learned, for it is possible to train oneself to avoid extreme reactions and uncontrolled emotional outbursts. It is the discipline of bhakti yoga which needs to be applied in everyday situations, the small seemingly insignificant incidences.

Gain and loss, success and failure do not only refer to the dramatic events in life but to all those moments based on expectation: the phone that did not ring or finally did, a job interview that did not go well or secured employment, a 'thank you', a 'see you soon' spoken or not, a train missed or caught just in time. The way the feelings of anger, disappointment, joy and relief are managed, expressed or suppressed determines the level of equanimity.

The Old Testament offers a simple method to sail through the sea of emotional ups and downs – gratitude. In the Book of Job, Job experiences the highest level of

personal, social and professional success and the deepest level of loss, abandonment and despair. He continues to live with dignity and balance due to the philosophy of gratitude. Whatever occurs to him, or his family, friends and wealth, he replies with a simple: ‘The Lord has given, the Lord has taken, thanks be to the Lord.’

This is the wisdom and love of a bhakta whose faith in the truth, beauty and benevolence of God remains unshaken. Once managed emotions become positive and sattwic qualities are expressed in one’s daily interactions. These are the qualities which will endear the aspirant to Sri Krishna:

1. To be free from malice towards all beings
2. To be friendly
3. To be compassionate
4. To be free from the feeling of ‘I’ and ‘mine’
5. To be forgiving by nature
6. To be ever content
7. To have the mind, senses and body subdued
8. To have a firm resolve
9. To be internally and externally pure
10. To be wise
11. To be impartial, equal to friend and foe
12. To be above all distractions
13. To be without the sense of doership
14. To be without the sense of ownership
15. To be without joy or desire, hatred or grief
16. To be free from attachment
17. To be equal in contrasting experiences, such as pleasure and pain
18. To be balanced in joy and sorrow
19. To be equal in honour or praise, ignomy or reproach
20. To be full of contemplation
21. To be full of devotion to Sri Krishna
22. To have mind and reason surrendered to Sri Krishna.

The aspirant may choose any one of these ‘endearing’ qualities and develop them with the help of a sankalpa. The heart can be trained as much as the mind. Each quality is a sadhana and the sankalpa can be used as the foundation. If every quality is practised for a month, with focus and sincerity, then the aspiring bhakta will be that much dearer to Sri Krishna in less than two years time. He will be inspired to continue the path of perfecting each quality until purity, joy and the sense of union with all is attained, until he is a bhakta indeed.



8

Practices

Bhakti yoga has to be practised in everyday life. Bhakti yoga is the effort one makes to manage, purify and express positive emotions. The aspiring bhakta should record, monitor and be constantly aware of the effort being made, aware of the steps that take him ahead on the journey and those steps taken in the wrong direction or not taken at all.

Some simple techniques can be used as mirrors reflecting one's being and manner of interaction. The more effort put into these practices, the clearer one's reflection will become.

These techniques can be done separately or combined; they can be practised over an indefinite period or a fixed duration of time. It is up to aspirants how they want to keep track of their growth. In the beginning, it is necessary to experiment and find the methods best suited, to be creative and try out various possibilities, yet without losing the aim of bhakti yoga, namely to cultivate love and express it to one and all.

REVIEW OF THE DAY

Every night before going to sleep, the day should be analyzed, from the time of waking until the present moment. What did one do? How did one interact with people, circumstances and situations? When was there a

feeling of anger? When did one feel confused or depressed? Each moment, each hour of the day is observed. If there has been some problem in communication or interaction with someone, the following question should be asked, 'If I encounter the same situation again, is there a better way to deal with it?'

In this way, responses and reactions are being observed on a day-to-day basis. It only takes five minutes at night. In the course of time, the practitioner will find that he is better able to control his reactive behaviour. Analyzing the events of the day must be done when one is about to go to sleep, to clear the mind of all the clutter that has accumulated during the day.

The day may be divided into different sections of time: morning, afternoon and evening; or in smaller time periods, like before breakfast, between breakfast and lunch, from lunch to dinner, after dinner. According to one's lifestyle, one may want to look at the day in regard to places: home, work and travel. The more detailed the review, the more defined the image; however, a balance has to be found between precision and becoming lost in or obsessed with a particular situation. The whole day should be reviewed, for only then can certain situations be singled out for analysis.

To make the practice of self-observation more concrete, the next step is to write down the findings of the review in a spiritual diary.

SPIRITUAL DIARY

Turn back the leaves of your spiritual diary. Mark your spiritual progress. Note how far you have advanced in cultivating virtues like humility, courage, truthfulness, cosmic love and purity. Even if there is a setback in certain things, do not despair. Be regular in keeping your spiritual diary. Spiritual progress will be greatly quickened.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

Swami Sivananda emphasizes the importance of keeping a spiritual diary. It is a checklist of spiritual progress, not a patient recipient for one's emotions. A spiritual diary is a matter-of-fact record, a practical tool for chronicling one's behaviour, attitudes and interactions in daily life.

Two methods for the practice of keeping a spiritual diary are proposed. The simple version is a checklist, yes or no:

- Did I manage my emotions today?
- Was I negative today? Did I express my negativity?
- Was I emotionally balanced or did I experience emotional ups and downs?

The more elaborate version involves noting the actual situation when one emotion was felt and expressed or maybe suppressed. The spiritual diary has to serve as the journal of change in life.

The following examples may be used by aspirants as a model or guideline until they find the method best suited for their purpose. They may also focus on only one quality at a time, or discover some or all qualities simultaneously. Again, it is up to aspirants to find the method that will help them develop discipline and further their growth and practice of bhakti yoga.

These examples and questions are a bhakta's *swadhyaya*, self-analysis, in regard to the management of emotions and the effort required to purify gross emotions. Regularity and the commitment to a long duration of sadhana are necessary to obtain any result. These questions may guide the aspirant along the journey of exploration and transformation, the journey of bhakti yoga, the journey towards the divinity within.

Sadhana 2 – Developing Bhakti

Discipline	What was the practice?	How long daily/weekly did I practise?	How did I feel after the practice/at the end of the day?
<i>Satsang</i>	I listened to a talk by Sri Swami Satyananda.	Half an hour daily.	Relaxed.
	I cancelled an invitation by a colleague.	I still keep my distance.	Relieved.
<i>Shravanam</i>	I read <i>The Lives of Saints</i> by Swami Sivananda.	One hour on Sunday.	Inspired.
<i>Kirtan</i>	With family and friends.	Once a week.	Happy.
	With my yoga group.	Once a month.	Connected.
<i>Padasevam</i>	I maintained silence after 6 pm	Five days a week.	Recharged.
<i>Smaranam</i>	I did not remember my mantra other than during the evening practice,	Whole week.	Frustrated.
<i>Atmanivedana</i>	I accepted an 'unfavourable' situation as God's will.	Once this week.	Insecure but relieved.
	I rebelled mentally against given situations.	A few times this week.	Frustrated.

Sadhana 3 – Towards Sattwa

Quality	Today, how did I express an attitude of . . . ?	Today, how did I miss the opportunity to express an attitude of . . . ?	Today, what tool or practice helped me to regain or maintain an attitude of . . . ?
<i>Positivity</i>	I was friendly.	I was critical and judgmental.	I sang kirtan and repeated my mantra.
<i>Humility</i>	I accepted criticism calmly.	I tried to justify myself.	I compared myself with saints, sages and masters and accepted the stage at which I am.
<i>Contentment</i>	I did not feel like anything was missing in my life.	I felt like I deserved more recognition.	I took stock of all the good things that fill my life.
<i>Atmabhav</i>	I made an effort to see qualities in a person I don't like.	I thought the other person had no understanding of the situation.	I sang kirtan and realized that everything is pervaded by the presence of the divine.

Sadhana 4 – Swami Sivananda’s Eightfold Path

Discipline	How did I express this step today/ this week?	How did I feel?	How could I improve?
Serve	I went shopping for a neighbour.	Not aware of any feeling.	I could spend more time with the person after the shopping is done. I could be more aware and act sooner.
	I encouraged someone who felt dejected.	Satisfied.	
Love	I was kind to someone I usually prefer to ignore.	Surprised.	I could get to know the person better.
Give	I gave of my time.	Pleased.	I could be more organized in my giving.
Purify	I practised ahimsa today. I made an effort to be patient.	Relieved. Satisfied	I could make the effort more often.
Be good, do good	I made an effort not to criticize.	Satisfied.	I could be more aware of the critical tendency.
Meditate, realize	I contemplated the way I use my emotions	Not pleased with myself.	I decided to make more of an effort.

Sadhana 5 – To Be Dear to Sri Krishna

Here are some examples of how one may monitor the qualities Sri Krishna describes. These qualities are known to everyone, yet not always cultivated and expressed.

To be friendly

- Have I been friendly today?
- How many times have I been friendly?
- To whom was I friendly?
- How did I express my friendliness?
- How many times have I been unfriendly?
- To whom was I unfriendly?
- Why was I unfriendly?

To be above all distraction

- Did I succumb to distractions today?
- What were my distractions? TV, Internet, food and drink, phone, sleep?
- Why did I resort to distractions?
- How did I rise above distractions?

To be equal in honour or praise and ignomy or reproach

- How did I react to praise, compliments, flattery today?
- I accepted it.
- I felt pride.
- I felt I deserved it.
- I did / did not belittle it.
- I felt good for one hour / half the day / the whole day.
- I felt elated.
- How did I return to a balanced state?

How did I react to reproach, criticism, backbiting and slander?

- I felt anger and irritation.
- I felt humiliated.
- I justified myself.

- I criticized in return.
- I felt dejected for one hour / half the day / the whole day.
- How did I return to a balanced state?

SWAN PRINCIPLE

The SWAN principle is a further step on the path of discovering one's true nature and purifying oneself of negative tendencies and limitations. SWAN is an acronym which stands for **S**trength, **W**eakness, **A**mbition and **N**eed. The aspirant is asked to determine his ever-changing SWAN. After the review of the day, he chooses various situations in which a positive quality or a strength was expressed, or when a weakness, a limitation or the absence of a quality moulded an action, a thought or an interaction. He has to look at the ambition or desire behind an action and the need that prompted him to behave and interact in a certain way.

This practice can be done with any attitude or quality. Patience in a certain situation might have been expressed as a strength; in another situation the lack of it, impatience, was in the forefront and shaped the interaction. In yet another situation, one might have felt a strong desire to be patient, or even felt the need to deal with a certain person, the environment or oneself in a better, more patient way.

Here is an example of the questions one may ask in regard to the bhakti yoga sadhana:

- Where, when, with whom did I express kindness, compassion, understanding?
- Where were these qualities lacking? And why was I not able to express them?
- When did I want to make more of an effort to express a positive quality? Did I succeed; if not, why not?
- Where did I feel the need to express myself with more kindness and love?

With these questions one becomes aware of areas of positive attitude and behaviour, and areas which need to be improved. Regular practice shows that these qualities are

inherent in one's nature and personality. They are not static, but keep moving through the SWAN. Humility, for example, may be expressed as a strength at one time or in certain situations, but may be lacking yet necessary at another time. This is an encouraging insight and discovery, for if humility was once a strength, it can be made a strength again. The lack of humility is as temporary as the need or desire for it. This understanding opens the door towards a new experience of oneself.

Aspirants may choose to investigate one quality at a time, for a week or a month, and then focus on the next. They may want to experiment and change the approach from time to time. They may want to deal with one quality which appears mainly as a weakness and work on it. If contentment is absent and always felt as a need, they may want to invest time and energy to make contentment a reality and an expression of their being.

Each of the four elements of the SWAN is necessary; none should be left out or ignored. Honesty, sincere commitment and a constant effort to change are the tools that one has to use to make life a beautiful experience. Each day is a journey through the unsteady waters of life, but with awareness as the captain, the boat will safely reach the day's end and come a bit closer to the goal of peace and harmony.

The aim is to overcome limiting conditions and create more harmony for oneself and the environment. Through practice aspirants can explore the SWAN principle and, at the same time, the SWAN principle will explore the nature, behaviour and interactions of the aspirants.

SWAN principle – Investigating qualities

	Strength	Weakness	Ambition	Need
Day 1	Friendliness	Pride, Lack of discipline	Patience	Patience
Day 2	Being generous	Uncontrolled emotional outburst	Humility	Kindness
Day 3	Being Content	Doubting, wavering	Being more positive	Simplicity

The practice of the SWAN meditation helps to develop any one of the ‘good’ qualities listed above. Once one is aware of one’s strengths, one can start to apply them more often in situations that require improvement and better management. One’s weaknesses can be tackled one by one. The aspirant chooses one weakness to work with, reduces the impact and influences, and finally discards it altogether.

THE 18 ITIES OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

Swami Sivananda composed the following *Song of 18 ITIES*:

Serenity, Regularity, Absence of Vanity,
Sincerity, Simplicity, Veracity;

Equanimity, Fixity, Non-irritability,
Adaptability, Humility, Tenacity;

Integrity, Nobility, Magnanimity,
Charity, Generosity, Purity.

Practise daily these eighteen ‘ITIES’,
You will soon attain immortality.
Brahman is the only entity.
You will abide in eternity and infinity.
You will behold unity in diversity.
You cannot attain this in the university.
But you can attain this in the Yoga-Vedanta Forest University.

The song of 18 ITIES lists virtues or divine qualities ending in 'ITY'. It is a discipline in its own right. The practice is to follow the given sequence as one positive quality leads to the next. Awareness and detachment, the qualities of *drashta*, the witness, are the basic ingredients of all ITIES. A judgmental and overly critical stance is not part of the practice, for the aim is to develop an understanding of one's nature and personality and replace negative traits with positive ones, with an ITY.

Sometimes understanding comes spontaneously; sometimes reflection, error and trial, adjustment and change are required. Looking at an ITY day after day enhances one's general ability to expand awareness; at the same time, developing awareness of one's interactions in the world and inner state of being reveals the existence or absence of an ITY. One should practise each ITY for a month and then move on to the next. After the first round of eighteen months, another round can be added, or one may decide to focus on a particular ITY one would like to develop. The use of a spiritual diary to record practice and progress is again advised.

The SWAN theory can be combined with the ITIES practice. Learning about the ITIES is a wonderful sadhana, living and perfecting them every day yet another. Practising the ITIES leads to self-purification. The practice helps to connect with others and the divine, and reach the sublime goal of bhakti yoga.

The following are a few suggestions on how one can approach the ITIES, and understand, practise, develop and finally live and perfect each one of them. However, it is the bhakta who will discover his own understanding of and relationship with the ITIES, his tricks and tools to master and love these divine qualities. Swami Sivananda's definitions can also be used as inspiration and direction.

Serenity

Be tranquil within. Let that inner peace and joy radiate through a serene countenance. A serene countenance is peaceful, smiling and serious and does not betray any violent emotions. It is like the surface of a still lake.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Positivity: There are a few elements or ingredients that help to develop serenity. The most important is the effort to cultivate a positive attitude towards the myriad situations of everyday life. Children are a wonderful means to reconnect with serenity, so is nature. To look at a flower, a tree, to listen to birds or to look at the sky are sure ways to recapture the state of serenity – where there is so much beauty, a positive response is guaranteed.

Gratitude: A natural outcome is a sense of gratitude towards creation and the creator. Gratitude opens the heart to serenity. It is not difficult to find beauty or something positive, however small; it only takes the will to look for it.

Acceptance: Serenity is an attitude of acceptance, not of judging oneself and others. There is no feeling of guilt for one's own wrongdoing or blame for others.

Trust: This is necessary to counter fear and doubt.

Detachment: The attitude of 'I am not the doer but the observer' is a great help for the cause of serenity. The ability and discipline to become an observer at all times is a safe way to spend the day serenely.

Humour: Humour sees the funny side before the tears start rolling, before the anger starts welling up. Humour is an expression of awareness, an acute sense of living in the present.

Love: Love is probably the most powerful and direct way to feel and radiate serenity. It is an inner personal experience and an attitude which expresses itself in one's interaction with the outside world. The return is so much greater as it satisfies the desire for serenity.

Regularity

Be regular in your daily habits, and in your work and spiritual practices. Get up at a particular time. Be clock-like in your daily activities. You will be free from worry, fear, anxiety, haphazard and shabby work. You will do the right thing at the right moment.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Time management: Disciplined timing means going through the day doing the things that have to be done at the right time with courage and honesty. Taking the time to put things in order is a most efficient way of conserving energy. Regularity also requires courage to withstand the many external distractions, and honesty to face the internal manoeuvres of the mind trying to avoid order.

Freedom: Regularity is freedom; it frees the mind of unnecessary mental activity and saves energy which is otherwise used in inventing choices and options.

Awareness: This is the base of every ITY. In regard to regularity, it prevents rigidity and blindness to the present moment. The extreme of regularity without awareness is addictive behaviour where the person has regulated the addiction and given it a timetable.

Lifestyle: The importance of a regular and regulated lifestyle cannot be emphasized enough. The well-planned structure of the day, week and year help to find balance and focus within. Ashram life is the best example of living with regularity.

Absence of vanity

Do not boast of your birth, position, qualifications and spiritual attainments. Praise others. See good in all. Treat even the lowliest creatures as your equal and with respect.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Forgiveness: If we can forgive those we feel have wronged us, there is absence of vanity. This forgiveness expresses itself in kindness, friendliness and true openness.

Identification: Vanity comes whenever one thinks one is the doer; whenever there is the slightest identification with what I am, what I have and what I do, whenever there is the slightest trace of 'I', which may be as a superman, superwoman or as a total loser. However, when there is awareness of oneself as an instrument or the flute to be played upon, there is no space for vanity.

Gratitude: The best remedy against vanity is gratitude towards guru and God for whatever there is or is being done. The best proof of the absence of vanity is to live and put into practice the idea of the following prayer of 17th century Christian nun, which can also be used for most of the ITIES:

*Lord give me the patience to endure what cannot be changed,
The courage to change what can be changed,
The wisdom to know the difference.*

Sincerity

Let your words agree with the thoughts, let your actions agree with your words. Let there be harmony among thoughts, words and actions.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Unity: Sincerity is a constant effort to strive for and reach unity of thought, word and deed, but once achieved, the resulting sensation and satisfaction is one of sincerity.

Honesty: Sincerity makes the action follow the preceding thought or word. Sincerity implies honesty because to think one thing and do another is dishonest.

Artlessness: A synonym for sincerity is artlessness. The jumping, restless mind is artful and crafty, but to harmonize thought, word and deed takes 'only' sincere will.

Viveka: Discrimination is necessary to live sincerity, as often the external circumstances demand some adjustment to complete sincerity; the bigger picture has to be taken into consideration.

Simplicity

Be artless. Be simple in your speech. Do not twist words and topics. Be plain, avoid diplomacy, cunningness and crookedness. Be simple in your dress. Be simple in your food.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Lifestyle: The yogic lifestyle is a way to develop simplicity. The amount of real and imagined needs and desires can always be reduced. There is always a way to speak, dress, eat, behave and live more simply.

Self-confidence: The ability to rely on oneself, one's values and principles is necessary in order to withstand the influence of society. For society does not live on the basis of simplicity, but reinforces and creates more needs and desires.

Veracity

Be truthful. Stick to your promises. Do not exaggerate. Do not twist facts. Think twice before you speak. Speak truthfully. Speak sweetly. Be precise in what you say.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Self-enquiry: Veracity is the result of self-enquiry, constant awareness, knowing one's SWAN and remembrance of one's sankalpa.

Honesty: Veracity does not deal only with being honest with oneself – which is hard enough – but also with being honest and straightforward with others, and expressing this honesty in an inoffensive way.

Responsibility: People are responsible for their thoughts, words and deeds. They should say: “I am angry,” not “You make me angry,” “I am disappointed,” not “You let me down.” With responsibility comes emotional detachment in interactions, clarity of mind and respect for others.

Control: Veracity may be used to act as a control force to check if and how the other ITIES are being applied. It can act as a reminder to practise the preceding ITIES.

Equanimity

Be calm. Bear insult patiently. Bear injury, suffering, failures and disrespect calmly. Do not be elated by praise, pleasure, success and honour. Look upon both with equal vision. Behave alike towards friends and foes. Never let anything disturb your inner peace.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Viveka: Equanimity refers to a balanced attitude in the face of positive and negative situations. A situation should be met with discernment. As soon as judgement creeps in, equanimity is at stake. Success and failure are but two sides of the same coin and equanimity does not differentiate.

Witness: Pressure from outside is a tremendous challenge to equanimity. Being a witness is a way out, but there must be outward equanimity, control and calmness towards the other person, as well as control of the inner turmoil and hurt which may persist for much longer. Equanimity is the attitude of being the impartial witness, concerned yet not moved, acting without reacting.

Living in the present: Projections, worries for the future as well as clinging to memories and the past lead to loss of equanimity.

Fixity

Remember that you cannot achieve anything if you are fickle-minded. Choose your goal or ideal and remember it always. Never let it go out of mind even for a moment.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Sankalpa: In order to practise fixity, the goal must be clear and the motivation to attain it strong. Therefore, the bhakta must take time to decide his *sankalpa*, resolution, no matter whether it is a short or long-term *sankalpa*.

Process: There are various steps in developing fixity: the initial effort, spontaneous flow towards the goal, attaining the aim effortlessly, resignation, prevarication

and distraction, re-establishing initial motivation. What is needed is the knowledge of when to act, to persist and when to relax.

Willpower: Fixity is based on a strong sense of determination and willpower; otherwise it is not possible to withstand the constant external distractions and mental dissipation. Whether cooking a meal, typing a letter or managing a big budget project, fixity is necessary in order to accomplish anything.

Faith: In order to keep sight of the goal and to face obstacles bravely, faith is required. Faith in the goal, its worth and value, faith in the road that leads to the goal, faith in one's abilities to reach it and faith in a higher benevolent force that helps along the road.

Patience: Often postponing, delaying, making new arrangements are part of the way to the goal and one must allow for the unforeseen to happen.

Non-irritability

Irritability is the precursor of violent outbursts of anger. Watch carefully for the disturbance in the mental equilibrium. Watch for the ripples of anger that might rise in the lake of the mind. Quell them then and there. Do not allow them to assume greater proportions. Then you will attain peace.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

Identification: Irritation arises the moment there is identification. From identification follow projection and reaction. Identification refers to one's personality and belief system. If something happens that does not correspond to one's idea of right and wrong, there is irritation. There is a Zen saying: 'Do not look for truth, give up all opinions.' In regard to the SWAN principle, irritability sets in when either a Weakness, an Ambition or a Need are touched and concerned. A person is irritated because his pride and arrogance (weakness) have been hurt, while he wanted

respect and cooperation (aspiration/ambition) and required courage and communication skills (need).

Acceptance: Criticism, disapproval or judgement are various degrees of irritability which may or may not be expressed. Every 'too' is an indication of irritability. When something is too long, too hot, too cold, it means that an idea, an expectation has not been fulfilled. Contentment, the knowledge that what I receive is what I need, and all is for the best, is a higher stage of acceptance.

Humour: The ability to laugh at oneself and the situation is an essential ingredient of non-irritability. The moment one can switch to humour, all irritation is gone.

Adaptability

Understand well the nature of people with whom you come into contact. Adjust your mode of approach to them. Adjust yourself in such a way as to be pleasing to them. Joyfully bear with the eccentricities of others. Always react in a harmonious manner. Serve all and love all. Have the feeling that God dwells in the hearts of all as the Self of all.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Letting go: Adaptability is only possible if one is able to let go of what is in the way, such as habits and preconceived ideas about oneself and others. Attachment to opinions and patterns of behaviour block one's movements and adaptability; letting go is openness and freedom.

Discipline: It is necessary to take time to evaluate a situation and people before adapting. Adaptability does not mean rushing into any given situation, but facing it with as much understanding as possible.

Priorities: Setting priorities is an important aspect of adaptability, and sickness is a good teacher. Trying to adapt bodily needs, like rest, with a workload waiting on the desk, or the needs of others, one must establish priorities.

Strength: Adapting is an expression of one's strengths, the S in the SWAN. When one acts or adapts out of a weakness,

be it fear, lack of clarity or indifference, it is more a case of submitting to a situation rather than consciously adapting to it.

Service: The art of adaptability is the art of finding a compromise to suit all. However, when the spirit of service prevails, adaptability takes care of itself. It is the opposite of self-centredness; it is not self-denial but the search for rendering service.

Positivity: The test is simple: if the outcome of adapting is more tension, uneasiness or conflict, either the method or motive was wrong. If the outcome is a positive, constructive move ahead towards mutual understanding and goodwill, the attitude of adaptability was applied. The aim is to solve conflicts and create an atmosphere of harmony. An important aspect of adaptability is to have a positive aim in mind and adapt according to that aim.

Humility

Respect everybody. Bow with folded hands before all. Do not talk in a loud voice before elders and venerable persons. See God in all and feel that you are His servant and so the servant to all. Consider none as inferior to you.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Highest sadhana: As Swami Sivananda used to say, “Bear insult and injury. Highest sadhana.” It is the highest sadhana as our ego and everything we identify with is touched. Humility is the opposite of ego; the stronger the ego, the harder it is to be humble.

Gratitude: Feeling grateful for whatever happens and knowing that it is all for the best is an expression of humility, as long as the feeling is sincere and honest. As soon as flattery or fishing for compliments comes in, there is no humility but self-interest and ego-motivated action.

Politeness: To find a polite way of saying things or acting is part of humility. To take the time and think of the person who will receive the words or one’s actions is a sign of

humility. Humility is to make others feel at ease; the expressions are manifold, such as a joke, kindness, a service rendered or a smile.

SWAN: This practice is a teaching in humility as it brings us face to face with our true, ever-changing nature. To know our weaknesses, ambitions and needs, and to be aware of our constant mental fluctuations is a humbling experience. However, the SWAN does not leave the practitioner with a bitter taste or negativity; on the contrary, it encourages and motivates one to strive for improvement.

ITIES: Humility is actually a prerequisite for all ITIES. No ITY can be practised without humility. It is like leaving the ego behind and putting the ITY above the interests of the ego. Practising the ITIES makes one aware of shortcomings and faltering steps, but the beauty of the divine qualities inspires the practitioner to move towards perfection.

Tenacity

This is the natural friend of fixity. Once you have fixed your aim and chosen your path stick to it. Do not waver. Be steadfast. Never compromise on your fundamental principles. Have the attitude: “I may give up my life, but I will not swerve from the path; I will not break my vows.”

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

One-pointedness: Tenacity is close to fixity and implies the discipline of living up to one’s resolve. Tenacity is the quality of determination, firmness and persistence. A tiny fern plant pushing itself through a block of concrete is nature’s teaching of tenacity.

No expectation: When expectations are attached to an action, tenacity is in danger. Expectation is the source of desire for success and fear of failure. This desire may distract from the final goal. Tenacity only works without expectation, while addictive behaviour is based on having expectation. Without the expectation of a desired effect (a high, a thrill,

satisfaction, stupor, escape, happiness) the addict would not take the trouble to obtain what he thinks is necessary.

Patience: It takes so much patience to go on and on, to fall and get up, to fall and get up. Patience is not an ITY, but tenacity is a good substitute. Patience is the first and foremost condition for the practice of all ITIES, and for any path or sadhana.

Integrity

Develop an integral personality. Tie all the loose ends of your character. Become a man of high moral principles. Lead a life of righteousness. Let righteousness waft its sweet fragrance from you. Everyone will trust you, obey you, respect you and revere you.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Wholeness: Integrity is an unimpaired state of honesty, righteousness and honour. People of integrity can be trusted, they are true to themselves, there is no split, doubt, or wavering in them. Head, heart and hands are in harmony. There cannot be conflict where there is integrity.

Order: Orderliness and tidiness must be part of integrity. It is difficult to have integrity if the mind is constantly attracted to mountains of work left undone. Order is a sign of freedom, while a messy environment is bondage.

Initiative: Integrity needs to be lived, expressed, put into action, shared and given. In order to express integrity, one must act and often take initiative to create an outlet for the expression of head, heart and hands. Sincerity is more of an internal attitude, whereas integrity is the expression of that attitude.

Do your best and leave the rest: This is integrity in a nutshell. Scrupulous honesty is required in regard to head, heart and hands. The effort to find harmony within and to communicate this harmony to others will result in integrity.

Nobility

Shun mean-mindedness as dung and poison. Never look into the defects of others. Always appreciate the good qualities of everyone. Be dignified in bearing. Never stoop to ignoble thoughts, words or actions.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Sattwa: A sattvic person is a noble person. A person with a sattvic nature, full of moral worth and excellence is a noble person. Nelson Mandela said, “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.” Nobility is the knowledge that this light and power are a gift given to help improve the quality of life of others.

Humility is an aspect of nobility whereas arrogance and pride are the opposite. Admitting mistakes is part of nobility as is expressing it to others in a simple and honest way. A noble person is a strong and courageous person. His strength is the knowledge of being a tool in the plan of guru and God.

Kindness: Nobility may just be kindness. There are so many ways and possibilities in a day to be kind. Everyone has a backlog of letters to be written, phone calls and visits to be made. New acts of kindness can be created, for kindness and more kindness must be part of nobility. It is sacrifice of one’s interests, desires and comfort zone.

In between: Nobility stands between one’s lower nature and the aspiration to reach the heavens. A noble person takes on social responsibility and at the same time has the personal responsibility of reaching the goal of perfection. It is not a private ITY, for it must be shared and inspire others.

Magnanimity

Take a broad view of things. Ignore the faults of others. Be great and noble-minded in whatever you do. Avoid silly talk and childish prattle. Let not the mind dwell on little things and insignificant things.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Self-acceptance: This is the beginning of magnanimity. As long as there is rejection of one's self or a part of one's self, there cannot be true acceptance of another person. One must be able to accept one's full range of strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs in order to accept others and their SWAN.

Non-attachment: Magnanimity is the opposite of attachment: letting go of anger, worries and resentment. Hankering over events, endlessly calculating and speculating are signs of a petty mind. A magnanimous mind is generous, forgiving and courageous.

Cheerfulness: The expression of magnanimity must be joyful. It cannot be grumpy and negative, but must be light and bright. If it has the wellbeing and upliftment of others in view, magnanimity can only be lived with a smile on the face.

Gratitude: This is an aspect which is directed towards guru and God, life and destiny giving us all we need. Magnanimity is the knowledge, acceptance and expression in daily life of the saying from the Book of Job (Old Testament): 'God has given, God has taken, praise be to the Lord'.

Charity

Give, give and give. This is the secret of abundance. Radiate thoughts of goodness and love. Forgive the faults of others. Bless the man who injures you. Share what you have with others. Disseminate spiritual knowledge to one and all. Use the material wealth, knowledge and spiritual wisdom that you possess as a divine trust.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Forgiveness: To forgive and let go, not holding any grudge against anyone is a charitable attitude. The ability to be totally in tune with the needs and moods of the other person is charity. Charity means emptying oneself to become the perfect flute and channel. Charity is the effort to look beyond the visible, to see what is hidden behind the mask people wear, knowingly and unknowingly.

Kindness: Charity without kindness is nothing but the condescending act of a do-gooder. The vine is a beautiful example of charity. In spring, the vine is cut down to a pitiful stump no more than a foot high. Nine months later, this wooden stump has grown tall and is giving its fruit in abundance, while the leaves paint the countryside golden. After the harvest, the bare branches are tied down and for three months the vine remains covered in snow, until again it is cut down in preparation for a rich harvest. This goes on for twenty years, after which the last stump is pulled out and used for firewood.

Awareness: The practice of charity is a means to increase awareness and consciously make the choice to give or not to give. Constant awareness is the key to all ITIES and the key to a more harmonious life, a creative, productive life full of love. Applying this awareness in one's life is charity to oneself, to others and to life itself.

Change: The hardest kind of giving is the giving up of habits, attachments and fixed ideas. Putting aside weakness and identification in order to try and satisfy the needs of others is an act of charity. Overcoming one's weaknesses to help others is as difficult as it is charitable.

Like a river: Swami Sivananda says, "The water of the Ganga cannot decrease if thirsty people drink it. So also your wealth cannot decrease if you do charity. Share with others whatever you possess, physical, mental or spiritual. You will expand. You will experience oneness and unity of life. Strip yourself of the veils of limitations."

Generosity

In whatever you give be liberal. Have a large heart. Do not be miserly. Take delight in the joy of others in making them happy. Generosity is a sister virtue of charity. It is the fulfilment of charity, magnanimity and nobility.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Give, give, give: There is a children's story called *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein about the relationship between a boy and an apple tree. The boy comes to climb and play in the branches of the tree, eating the ripe apples. As a young man he comes asking for money to build a house for his family. The tree gives him its branches to sell. After family life and its disillusion, he wants to go away and the tree gives him its trunk to build a boat. At the end, the boy returns an old man. The tree is sad because it has nothing left to offer except its old stump. The old man accepts and rests on the stump of the tree. The apple tree is happy to offer whatever it has.

Generation: Generosity is linked with generating. Whatever is given with an attitude of generosity should generate wellbeing, happiness and peace in the receiver.

Fearlessness: Generosity must be fearless and ready to give and do the unexpected. Therefore, it cannot be linked to any expectation of reciprocity and must be totally open.

Understanding: Understanding may be the highest form of generosity. It may not come easily or spontaneously, but it is making the effort to understand that is generous. The opposite is judgement and criticism, which is the short way out, for no effort is required to judge.

Sacrifice: Sacrificing self-interest, self-identification and selfishness is true generosity.

Purity

Be pure at heart. Eradicate lust, anger and greed. Be pure in your thoughts. Think of God always. Think of the wellbeing of all. Be pure in your words; never utter

harsh, unkind words. Be pure in body. Keep it clean and healthy. Let the dress and surroundings be clean. Observe the rules of physical, moral and spiritual hygiene.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

Understanding: Purity is closest to serenity and the laughter of a child. However, having gone through the furnace of seventeen ITIES, understanding is the foundation of purity. An understanding of oneself, others and life, its joys, opportunities and purpose, has developed with the practice and that gives one purity.

Kirtan: Singing is an expression of purity. Singing God's name is maybe the easiest way to come close to purity.

Mirror: Even though it might be difficult to feel purity or to identify an act of purity, it can be recognized in nature, which abounds in purity – in the violent outrage of a storm, the peace of a sunset, the beauty of a flower or the simplicity of a blade of grass. The saying, 'There is nothing without that isn't within', encourages one to discover one's purity by removing mental impurities. That is the purpose of the practice of the 18 ITIES and of sadhana.



9

Bhakti Yoga for Children

Children are bhaktas, naturally, spontaneously. They are innocent and therefore full of love and openness. Children are pure. They know of bhakti, santosha and atmabhava, they know how to seek that which is uplifting, inspiring and good.

Jesus said, “Be you like little children,” for he knew that the key to spiritual awakening is the innocence of children. To maintain that innocence as long as possible is the duty of parents, the family and society. There is no advantage in becoming adults at an early age, yet there are invaluable advantages in retaining the freedom of childhood.

In the Indian tradition children at the age of seven or eight were taught surya namaskara, nadi shodhana pranayama and the chanting of the Gayatri mantra. These practices were intended to delay hormonal changes in the child and ensure that the mental and emotional development occurred along with physical growth.

The disciplines of bhakti yoga are inherent in children, and need hardly any art or effort to be practised. Singing, laughing, being kind and helpful, loving all without distinction is the joy of childhood. Introducing children without any formality to the practices of bhakti yoga provides a strong foundation that will support them during the turbulent years as teenagers, the first steps into adulthood and a life of commitment and responsibilities.

Kirtan: Children love kirtan. They express in a natural way their positive feelings, and can go on for a long time, immersing themselves completely in the bhav and vibrations. All they need is to be given the opportunity to do so. The family can come together daily or once a week and sing kirtan; they may invite friends or neighbours. Friends may take turns hosting a kirtan session once a week or once a month, giving children free reign to sing without a sense of performance or competition. It is the experience of joy shared among all that matters.

Seva: Children love to help and render little services. Parents only have to create opportunities within the family itself, the neighbourhood or community. Seva should become a regular practice and not depend on personal moods and whims. Children are able to experience the joy derived from helping others.

Older children and teenagers can be introduced to the practice of swadhyaya. A spiritual diary and the 'Review of the Day' are practices which help them bring understanding and insight into their behaviour and interaction with others. This is the first step on their journey of becoming positive, confident and creative adults.



10

Inspiring Quotes

AMRITASHTAKA

These are the eight slokas in the *Bhagavad Gita* (12:13 to 20), or *Amritashtaka*, listing the qualities which endear a person to Sri Krishna.

That bhakta of Mine who is non-jealous, friend of all beings, without notion of mineness, free from ego, balanced in pain and pleasure and tolerant. Continuously contented and in communion with cosmic consciousness, self-controlled and firmly determined, dedicated to Me in mind and intellect, is dear to Me. (13–14)

He is dear to Me, by whom the people are not disturbed, and who is not disturbed by the people, and who is free from delight, anger, fear and agitation. (15)

That bhakta of Mine is dear to Me, who expects nothing from anyone, who is pure, impartial, devoid of agonies, and who renounces the feeling of doership in all undertakings. (16)

He who does not rejoice, does not hate, does not grieve, does not desire; that man, full of bhakti, who renounces the good and bad effects of his karma is dear to Me. (17)

That man, full of bhakti, is dear to Me, who is mentally balanced in friends and enemies, likewise in honour and in dishonour, in heat and in cold, in pleasure and in pain, and free from the association with worldly objects. Unto whom praise and reproach are alike, who is silent, contented with whatever he has, without attachment to home and fixed in mind. (18–19)

Those devotees who fully observe this nectar of pious wisdom as told above, who are endowed with faith and are solely devoted to Me, are extremely dear to Me. (20)

SWAMI SIVANANDA SARASWATI

Be kind and loving. Be pure and gentle. Be sweet and simple.

* * *

Compassion makes us divine.

* * *

Expand and build up all positive, virtuous, divine qualities, such as fortitude, patience and courage that are dormant in you.

* * *

Make friendship with humility. Then the people of the world will be your friend.

* * *

See God in all forms and all forms in the Lord. See the whole world as God. It is not necessary to abandon the world to have a vision of God, because the world itself is a manifestation of God.

* * *

Love looks not with the eyes but with the heart.

* * *

Practise the religion of the heart and build on the edifice of love.

* * *

God is in His heaven. The heaven is in your heart. If you search for Him in your heart, you will find Him there.

* * *

Love is the hope of this world.
 To put a smile on one sad face
 To touch one lonely life with grace
 To dry one tear
 To calm one fear
 To bring the light to one dark place . . .
 Lord, let it be my way with your grace and guru kripa.

* * *

Give, give, give. Giving is the very nature of love. Giving expands and purifies the heart.

* * *

Humanity is your God and service to humanity is your worship.

* * *

Bhakti is supreme love of God. Cultivate it through satsang, japa, kirtan, prayer, meditation and service.

* * *

Life moves by faith alone.

* * *

You can secure happiness if you contribute to the happiness of others.

* * *

Overcome the negative by the positive, the unholy by the holy, hatred by love, wrong by forgiveness.

* * *

What greater undertaking lies before you than purifying your life of all enmity, impurity, hatred, passion, and filling it with love, goodness, peace and purity?

* * *

Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, to all the people you can, in every place you can, at all times you can, with all zeal, strength, love, heart and interest you can, as long as ever you can.

* * *

If you want to be good, see what is good, hear what is good, think what is good, do what is good, speak what is good, read what is good, write what is good, eat what is good, drink what is good.

Prayer is the mystic bridge built across the gap between God and man.

* * *

Saints are not dropped from heaven. They are made by constant practice.

* * *

The first step on the spiritual path is selfless service of humanity.

* * *

Service breaks the ego and expands the heart.

* * *

Purify your heart. Melt hatred with love and malice with goodwill.

* * *

Seeing God in all beings and creatures is the best and surest way of developing a sympathetic and kind heart.



SWAMI SATYANANDA SARASWATI

The purpose of bhakti yoga is to develop intense concentration towards one object. This occurs spontaneously if there is a feeling of bhakti towards that object. All one's energy is focused in one direction.

* * *

Just as the rivers that flow down from the mountains ultimately meet the ocean, similarly all good karmas are ultimately contained in bhakti.

* * *

The culmination of all paths – tantra, raja yoga, karma yoga and jnana yoga, is bhakti. The totality of man's consciousness, his psyche, subconscious and conscious mind all meet at one point – bhakti! Once bhakti is realized, there is nothing beyond that.

* * *

When you work for your inner perfection, when you try to mend your nature, when you try to reshape your personality you have to work hard.

* * *

When you do good to others, when you work for others and not for yourself, it brings immense joy.

* * *

To think about others is to think about God. To worship others is to worship God.

* * *

Every form is God's form, and each form in its singleness includes all forms. Visualize only one form and repeat only one name.

* * *

Between the completion of one task and the beginning of another, you will always find some leisure. During such periods repeat God's name.

* * *

For one with an open heart, the whole world is his neighbourhood. But for one with a closed heart there is a division

between 'mine' and 'yours'. Everything belongs to God because He has given it to you. He is the ocean of prosperity, the ocean of grace, the ocean of mercy, the ocean of love. He gives to you so that you may give to others.

* * *

When the heart melts the intellect is withdrawn.

* * *

Your joy must be to help the people who have no joy.

* * *

God likes smiles and joy. You too must remain ever cheerful.

* * *

You have to share your job, your money. You have to share your happiness with everyone.

* * *

Divine steps are mysterious. To us, His plans seem to be whimsical and His orders beyond understanding, but a bhakta has full faith in Him. He will accept His arrangements as a form of divine grace. The real devotee does not murmur, complain or grumble over the past.

* * *

In the dictionary of faith there is no such word as impossible.

* * *

Everything happens for your good. Nothing is negative.

* * *

Faith is power and it can work miracles.

* * *

Faith is spontaneous connection and remembrance. Faith is the doorway between the room of individuality and the room of universality. That is the door which has to be opened.

* * *

There is only one secret of meeting all challenges of life: one has to be sincere and has to be innocent.

* * *

Simple life is a veritable blessing. Simplicity opens the gates which lead to heaven and God.

* * *

Rebuild your house on the strong foundation of love, peace, unity and strength. Real life is life in service, bhakti and yoga.

* * *

Without serving those in need your sadhana will not bear fruit. Sadhana should be combined with total selfless service.

* * *

When humankind learns how to love and serve each other, to be kind and tolerant to each other, to help each other and to share the problems, worries and ideas of others, then your family, society and the world will be a better place to live in.

* * *

Swami Sivananda was a man whose kindness and compassion knew no bounds. He was nothing but sweetness, nothing but smiling eyes. Throughout his life, in everything he did he maintained only one attitude – do good to everybody.

* * *

He who lives for others truly lives.

* * *

Prayer need not be taught at all, for every being has within the virtue of praying which can be manifested by means of bhakti.

* * *

Love is the only fertilizer of the soil of life.

* * *

Through kirtan you can reach the highest pinnacle of spiritual experience. Not by yoga or by any other means but by kirtan alone can you have the vision of the Divine.

* * *

Do not be in a hurry. Be patient and persevering, sincere and earnest.

* * *

Keep on moving for the good of many, for the pleasure of many, for the guidance of many, for the elevation of many, all over the world.

SWAMI NIRANJANANANDA SARASWATI

Bhakti yoga is the yoga to cultivate love in the heart. That love has to be selfless, not self-oriented.

* * *

Bhakti provides the missing aspect, when your life stops being mechanical and develops a sense of inner identity and union.

* * *

It is only through developing wisdom and virtue, and by disassociating the mind from the objects of attachments that one can experience bhakti in its fullest glory.

* * *

To practise bhakti yoga and develop bhakti, read something spiritual which can inspire you to discover yourself, practise kirtan, mantra, chanting, connect yourself with nature through a small havan. In that way, gradually you will cultivate understanding and love for your environment and for the people around you.

* * *

Selfless love connects one individual with another and a chain is created. When the chain is complete, you will realize you were loving God all the time.

* * *

The culmination of bhakti yoga is the flowering of love in your heart.

* * *

Bhakti yoga should become a method by which you can attain purity of your inner nature and connect with nature around you.

* * *

The yogic definition of devotion is fusion of the lower with the higher self. In the state of perfect harmony the energy of God begins to flow in the individual – that is the state of bhakti yoga.

* * *

Bhakti yoga is generally translated as the yoga of devotion, but the actual process of bhakti yoga is changing the condi-

tioning of worldly love, affection and possessiveness into an unconditioned, universal state.

* * *
Moving from the ridiculous to the sublime, that is bhakti yoga.

* * *
By becoming aware of and understanding our desires we can change them into a strong positive force which can open our eyes to other realities.

* * *
Bhakti, faith and the ability to surrender, are the results of being open in mind and spirit. If the mind is closed, there is no bhakti, no faith and no surrender.

* * *
To understand and create rapport with a person just put yourself in that person's shoes. Be that person for five minutes. Become that person for ten minutes. Identify with that person for ten minutes and you will know who that person is.

* * *
Understanding is the essence of life, the source of all creativity.

* * *
The constant effort to channelize divine energy into your life is the process of dharma, for the real dharma is linked with God and not with human beings. Dharma is letting the master sculptor shape your life in the way he has envisioned.

* * *
Children are pliable, innocent and devoted. They believe in higher realities, but they need proper training.

* * *
The sentence – “I cannot do it” – does not exist, when you have faith in yourself.

* * *
You must accept yourself and the situations in which you find yourself.

* * *

A constructive and creative approach to life which is in harmony with yourself and others is known as virtue.

* * *

The concept of *shraddha*, faith, in yoga is humbleness, simplicity, awareness of higher realities and surrendering oneself to the Supreme Energy.

* * *

Feeling from the heart is not the expression of an emotion rather it is a process of being spontaneous and opening up.

* * *

Looking at each new day as a new beginning develops the aspect of faith.

* * *

Learn to love, learn to laugh, learn to live . . . We are all cosmic jokes. We do not recognize that we are cosmic jokes until we realize that we are all sacred human beings.

* * *

The real miracle happens when you follow the wish of God and not your own wish.

* * *

The whole process of spiritual life is to be open and friendly with all fellow beings, to help, guide, love and live in harmony with each other.

* * *

Always be positive, creative and constructive, no matter what you are experiencing. Therefore, if you want to improve yourself and become creative, happy, satisfied and successful, take everything in life as a form of sadhana.

* * *

There is no difference between spiritual and worldly life. That is where you make the mistake. If you believe that your spiritual life is your daily life, and your daily life is your spiritual life, there will be no conflict.

* * *

The stage where one is able to contact a higher reality at any time is called surrender.

Practice Sheets

Sadhana 1 – Pratipaksha Bhavana for the Six Enemies

Quality	How did the enemy arise?	How long did the enemy last?	How did the enemy express itself?	How did I use the enemy's opposite?
<i>Kama</i> : Desire versus acceptance and contentment				
<i>Krodha</i> : Anger versus forgiveness				
<i>Lobha</i> : Greed versus generosity				
<i>Moha</i> : Delusion or infatuation versus reflection				
<i>Mada</i> : Pride and arrogance versus humility				
<i>Matsarya</i> : Jealousy and envy versus goodwill and happiness				

Sadhana 1 – Pratipaksha Bhavana to develop positive qualities

Quality	How did the negative response arise?	How long did the negative response last?	How did the negative response express itself?	How did I use the opposite quality?
<i>Patience</i> versus impatience				
<i>Kindness</i> versus rudeness, unkindness, harshness				
<i>Acceptance</i> versus criticism, judgmental attitude				

Sadhana 2 – Developing Bhakti

Discipline	What was the practice?	How long daily/weekly did I practise?	How did I feel after the practice/at the end of the day?
<i>Satsang</i>			
<i>Shravanam</i>			
<i>Kirtan</i>			
<i>Padasevam</i>			
<i>Smaranam</i>			
<i>Atmanivedan</i>			

Sadhana 3 – Towards Sattwa

Quality	Today, how did I express an attitude of . . . ?	Today, how did I miss the opportunity to express an attitude of . . . ?	Today, what tool or practice helped me to regain or maintain an attitude of . . . ?
<i>Positivity</i>			
<i>Humility</i>			
<i>Contentment</i>			
<i>Atmabhava</i>			

Sadhana 4 – Swami Sivananda’s Eightfold Path

Quality	How did I express this step today//this week?	How did I feel?	How could I improve?
<i>Serve</i>			
<i>Love</i>			
<i>Give</i>			
<i>Purify</i>			
<i>Be good, do good</i>			
<i>Meditate, realize</i>			

Notes



Conversations on the Science of Yoga is an encyclopaedic series presenting the vast, timeless culture of yoga topic by topic through the voice of three generations of masters – Swami Sivananda Saraswati, Swami Satyananda Saraswati and Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati. The teachings are given in question and answer format with the inclusion of verses from the scriptures, connecting the modern experience with the classical tradition.

Bhakti Yoga Book 6: A Guide to Sadhana in Daily Life proposes practical application of the principles of bhakti yoga. A variety of practices reflects the many possibilities inherent in the process of bhakti yoga to make it a living experience. Overcoming obstacles such as sleep, depression, doubt, fear, hatred, insincerity and hypocrisy is as important as developing positive qualities. Sri Krishna's description in the *Bhagavad Gita* of the qualities of a bhakta, as well as Swami Sivananda's 18 ITIES and his Eightfold Path are sadhanas of bhakti yoga.

Suggestions are given on how to introduce children to bhakti yoga, and practice sheets which help to record one's practice and thereby guide the aspirant towards improving the quality of life.



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